

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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**FACTIONAL VIOLENCE:  
THE GROWING THREAT**

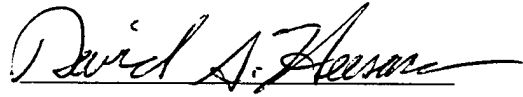
by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

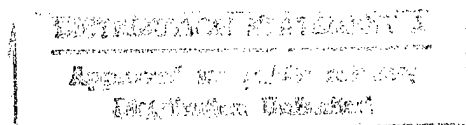
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## ABSTRACT

The demise of the Soviet Union as a world power and the reluctance of the United States to intervene in global disputes, presents an opportunity for numerous groups to aggressively seek power or autonomy. Often, these groups--commonly referred to as clans, factions, or tribes--resort to violence in an attempt to attain their goals. These disputes regularly involve other factions and frequently, several groups are engaged in warfare with each other.

Factions are bound by cultural, ethnic, or religious ties and many groups are accustomed to warfare as a way of life. Typically, the factions place extreme value in their heritage and often demonstrate little allegiance to the state. Some groups have discovered the financial gains offered by the drug business and organized crime.

America and the United Nations are moving from Peace Enforcement to strictly Peacekeeping missions. The price of delaying intervention is costly in terms of human lives and future expenditures to reestablish a functional government. Factional violence, often requires a combination of diplomacy, military intervention and economic assistance to reach a long-term solution. Some conflicts may not ever be fully resolved because of a tradition of societal warfare.

Factional violence presents unique challenges for military forces due to the often chaotic environment. MOOTW missions can be particularly complex and require commanders to adjust the way they apply the Operational Art.

**FACTIONAL VIOLENCE:  
THE GROWING THREAT**

**AFGHANISTAN BLEEDS AS FACTIONS IN HOLY WAR TURN  
ON EACH OTHER.**

Providence Journal, Nov 28, 1996

**BOSNIA A LESSON IN PEACEKEEPING - U.S. FORCES  
ARE LEARNING--SOMETIMES THE HARD WAY--THAT  
PEACEKEEPING INVOLVES MILITARY MIGHT AS WELL  
AS DIPLOMATIC AND CROWD-CONTROL SKILLS.**

Providence Journal, Nov 28, 1996

These headlines portray two increasingly related themes: conflicts are occurring--not between countries--but among groups of people within countries; and American military forces are being deployed to make, or maintain some semblance of peace.

***THE FUTURE?***

Political and military leaders can expect ever-increasing scenarios in which the legitimate government has lost control. Crime, violence and hunger will be rampant. Multiple clans, factions, or militia units within the same geographic area will demand individual recognition and claim a right to govern the people associated with them. Established borders will have less and less significance. Diplomatic initiatives will be futile because the recognized regime will have lost influence within the country. Military intervention may be welcomed, or resented. This type of environment may well become the rule, rather than the exception in the coming years.

## SO WHAT IS NEW?

Is this environment really unique for America's military? The United States has a long history of intervention in the domestic conflicts, humanitarian crises, insurgencies and civil wars of other countries. From the Banana Wars of the early 1900's, to the 1990's conflict in the Balkans, US forces have played a critical role in enforcing and implementing America's foreign policy.

What is unique is that the threat is as likely to be multiple belligerent groups as a single group of combatants. The rare, multi-dimensional conflict such as the one between the Nicaraguan Government and US Marines versus Miskito Indians and Sandinistas during the Nicaraguan campaigns of 1926 to 1933, is becoming routine.<sup>1</sup> As recent operations in Somalia and Bosnia imply, future commanders may frequently find themselves dealing with the multiple threats posed by several warring groups instead of a single force such as the Iraqi Army.

These groups will be generically referred to as *Factions*, however, other titles such as Clans or Tribes apply. Although occasionally beginning as insurgencies, these factions are usually not subversive and political ideology is more eclectic than the Cold War's "communism versus democracy" struggles. Instead, these groups are bound by ethnic, cultural, or even religious ties.

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<sup>1</sup>David C. Brooks, "U.S. Marines and Miskito Indians: The Rio Coco Patrol of 1928," Marine Corps Gazette, November 1996, 70.

## WHAT IS GOING ON?

The demise of the Soviet Union as a world power and the apparent reluctance of the United States to intervene in global disputes, presents an opportunity for numerous repressed groups to seek power or independence. Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington sees what he calls a "clash of civilizations" occurring:

"At the micro-level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values."<sup>2</sup>

Others believe that future wars and civil violence could arise from scarcities of vital resources such as water, land, forests, and food.<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Oakley, former Special Envoy to Somalia, believes unrest in troubled states will continue to rise and is due to systemic issues such as overpopulation, environmental destruction, hunger, poverty and bad governance.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the cause, conflict will continue to increase between segments of societies within states. Indeed, national boundaries drawn by the dominant powers after World War II,

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, 29.

<sup>3</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," The Atlantic Monthly, February 1994, 52.

<sup>4</sup>Robert B. Oakley, "Developing A Strategy for Troubled States," Joint Force Quarterly, Summer 1996, 82.

often with little regard for previously established cultural and ethnic groupings of people, are being challenged as irrelevant.

There are two primary causes of potential conflict between states and groups that reside within its established borders: first, groups may occupy territory that does not strictly coincide with the boundaries of the state; and second, many ethnic communities feel a strong historical linkage, or claim to certain areas that the state does not recognize.<sup>5</sup> More and more groups are demanding the opportunity to govern themselves on land they view as rightfully theirs.

Prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, infighting among some European groups was held in check by state regimes structured around the repressive policies of the communist system. Fourteen republics have since broken away from Moscow; others such as Chechnia, Kalmyk and Tatarstan for example, are demanding greater autonomy.<sup>6</sup> Kurdish groups are demanding their own states in Iraq and Turkey, and numerous Islamic groups throughout the Middle East desire independent recognition.

In other parts of the world, democracies supported repressive regimes simply to keep them out of the Soviet Block. Reduced, or eliminated economic and military aid (from both the United States and Russia), to governments throughout the world

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<sup>5</sup>John Coakley, ed., The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1993), 1-2.

<sup>6</sup>Michael E. Brown, "Causes and Implications of Ethnic Conflict," in Ethnic Conflict and International Security ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19.

has left weak regimes struggling to maintain power. "Economic, social and political change rarely (or never) leaves relationships between dominant and subordinate groups undisturbed, and a fundamental change tends to take place in the context of the modern states based on the notion of equality of citizenship."<sup>7</sup> As a result, militaristic factions within the populations affected, are taking advantage of the situation to change the status quo.

In Africa, tribal rivalries exacerbated by ineffective governments, have led to "disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels."<sup>8</sup>

In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, there were between 18.5 and 19.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance as of December 31, 1995.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the humanitarian issues, there are US citizens and important natural resources which are threatened by African instability. While the problems of Africa seem distant to most Americans, the ramifications of African societal disasters could have a global impact.

America's geographic Commanders-in-Chief (CINC's) see ten-

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<sup>7</sup>Coakley, 4.

<sup>8</sup>Kaplan, 46.

<sup>9</sup>United States Mission to the United Nations, Global Humanitarian Emergencies, 1996, (New York: 1996), 7.



sion and unrest among population groups within their Areas of Responsibility (AOR's) rising significantly. This is particularly true in Africa and parts of Europe, but factional dissention is not confined to certain parts of the world. Sometimes the unrest explodes into basic civil wars like the Rwandan situation between the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes. What has become increasingly more common are *complex civil wars* involving more than two warring factions such as the conflict in the Balkans, or the clan warfare in Somalia.

### **THE FACTIONS**

"Today, ethnic groups--or people with common ties of ancestry, language, culture, nationality, race, religion or some combination of several elements--are binding tighter and tighter, and seeking control over their destinies."<sup>10</sup> While these groups will pose a threat to established governments as they collectively seek their autonomy, they will also battle each other.

Research indicates there are two primary reasons why similar groups of people engage in hostilities: feuding (usually with revenge as a motive), and internal war (usually political).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, this reasoning may be too simplistic. For

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<sup>10</sup>Jay Stuller, "Nationalism Causes Ethnic Conflict," in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict, ed. Charles P. Cozic (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1994), 163.

<sup>11</sup>Keith F. Otterbein, War and Society: Vol. I, Feuding and Warfare (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 97.

example--the current factional fighting in Afghanistan is over which Islamic religious group will have political control over the country.

The factional fighter should not be taken lightly. The typical individual comes from a rural or nomadic background with a unique social background. The small homogeneous community, clan, or tribe to which he belongs, places a premium on loyalty to, and cooperation within, the tightly knit group. His normally austere lifestyle often requires physical endurance and hunting skills in order to survive. Warfare itself is often a traditional element of his society and he may believe in magic or rituals that prevent him from being harmed.<sup>12</sup>

Although this is mainly a third-world archetype, deep cultural identification is a common phenomenon in most non-western societies. In many groups, "... it is not where an individual resides and which state has jurisdiction over him that determines his nationality, but rather who he is--his cultural, religious, and historic identity--that is his ethnicity, the heritage received from his ancestors and carried with him, in mind and body, irrespective of his current domicile."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Major Jim McNulty, Irregular Warfare in the Conventional Theater: An Operational Perspective (Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, 1993, distributed by Defense Technical Information Center), 6.

<sup>13</sup>Uri Ra'anan, "The Nation-State Fallacy," in Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies ed. Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 14.

Cultural, ethnic and religious bonds are not the only factors that can unite groups. In Central and South America it is the financial lure of the illegal drug business. In an area of the world already smoldering with insurgent groups,<sup>14</sup> the narcotics industry has created violence prone factions referred to as *drug cartels*. The wealth of these drug cartels is such that they can purchase the most modern technology and weapons available.

There is an alarming rise in organized crime, especially in the former Soviet Union. Graham Turbiville sees the criminal ventures being cultivated by certain population groups as a major threat to regional stability:

"In environments where state institutions have been rendered ineffective by sweeping political change, war, internal challenges, or other factors, criminal enterprise has been quick to fill vacuums or seize new opportunities. In addition, the new or reinvigorated centers of interethnic conflict, insurgency, and various forms of regional and international terrorism have acquired an organized crime content that blurs distinctions between military and law enforcement problems in many regions of the globe."<sup>15</sup>

As with the drug cartels, the vast economic resources of

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<sup>14</sup>For example - the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in southern Mexico, and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) that took over the Japanese embassy in Peru.

<sup>15</sup>Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., "The Organized Crime Dimension of Regional Conflict and Operations Other Than War," in Ethnic Conflict and Regional Instability - Implications for U.S. Policy and Army Roles and Missions ed. Robert L. Pfalzgraff, Jr. and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College: 1994), 125-126.

successful organized crime factions allow them to purchase virtually any type of weaponry they desire. The criminal groups add another dimension to the factional violence threat.

### **THE POLICY QUESTION**

Since cultural, ethnic and religious clashes are occurring around the globe, it is important that America's military prepare to operate in an environment where rival groups are battling each other, the established government, or both. The real question is, where and under what circumstances, will the United States become involved?

Historically speaking, there is precedence for American intervention under the following circumstances: to protect US interests or citizens; to aid a close ally who is attacked or threatened; to combat blatant aggression perpetrated by a rogue state or leader; to sustain a peace; and, to assist in a humanitarian emergency. Often, the situation combines several of the circumstances at once.<sup>16</sup>

Early in his first term, President Clinton announced a *policy of enlargement* which indicated that America was not going to adopt an isolationist stance. The two tenets of the policy of enlargement--an increased level of military and economic security, and a fundamental desire to improve the condition of

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<sup>16</sup>For instance Desert Shield/Storm both protected U.S. vital interests and punished Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait. Bosnia also had peacekeeping and humanitarian aspects.

people throughout the world<sup>17</sup>--seemed to signify that America would continue to be actively involved in world affairs. However, the experience in Somalia seems to have dampened the US spirit for "assertive multilateralism"<sup>18</sup> and led to a more cautious approach.

President Clinton's Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) prescribes rigorous standards of review for both unilateral involvement and US support for, or participation in, United Nations (UN) sponsored peace operations. The essence of PDD-25 is that there has to be an actual peace in place before troops are deployed for peace operations. The mistakes made in Somalia and Bosnia have had widespread repercussions. The UN also wants to get out of the *Peace Enforcement*, or Chapter VII business and concentrate on more benign *Peacekeeping* missions.<sup>19</sup>

The oft trumpeted factional issue of self-determination is difficult, not only because of the potential creation of new states and borders, but because of the dilemma in which it places the US State Department. Freedom issues have always pro-

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<sup>17</sup>LtGen Anthony Zinni and Col Gary Ohls, "No Premium on Killing," Proceedings, December 1996, 27.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas G. Weiss, "Overcoming the Somalia Syndrome-- 'Operation Rekindle Hope?'" Global Governance, no.1, 1995, 179.

<sup>19</sup>The new UN Secretary General has spoken numerous times about the UN not being equipped to handle peace enforcement missions, citing their recent experience in Bosnia as an example.

Joint Pub 3-07 defines Peace Enforcement as the **application or threat** of military force to maintain or restore peace. It defines Peacekeeping as military operations undertaken with the **consent** of all major parties.

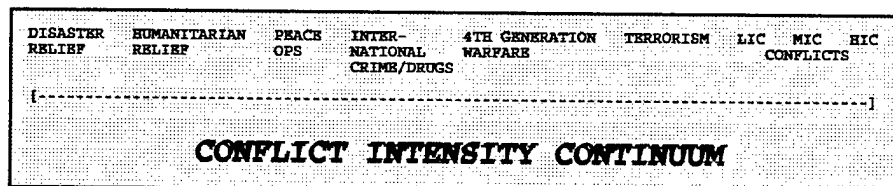
Chapter VII, Article 42 of the UN Charter authorizes whatever force necessary to restore peace.

vided impetus for American diplomatic forays; however, some cries for autonomy and self-governance are coming from groups that reside in nations closely aligned with the United States.

How US foreign policy will evolve entering the 21st century, is uncertain. The situation is fluid in many parts of the world, and will probably remain dynamic for the foreseeable future. Despite the caveats contained in PDD-25, it remains to be seen whether the US will actually wait for peace before intervening if factional violence leads to human suffering on a massive scale, or threatens the sovereignty of allies. Although other nations--notably Canada and France--have shown a willingness to deploy forces prior to the cessation of hostilities, the current UN policies on intervention make the international response to factional violence difficult to predict.

### ***THE CONSEQUENCES***

Factional violence spreads across what Marine Lieutenant General Zinni calls the *Conflict Intensity Continuum*:<sup>20</sup>



There is no portion of the continuum that does not involve the loss of life. The scale depends on the situation. As many people can be killed in a major disaster as can be killed in a Mid, or

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<sup>20</sup>Zinni and Ohls, 26.

High Intensity Conflict. As evidenced by the attempts at genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, the level of brutality some factional conflicts can produce is on par with actions attributed to the Nazis during World War II.

Ignited by events across the continuum, there are other consequences as well. Massive numbers of refugees, shattered state infrastructures, famine, disease and environmental damage are often by-products of the actual fighting. The economic costs as a result of such events are staggering.

In April of 1995, the US Congress passed an emergency supplemental appropriation for the Department of Defense in the amount of 2.235 billion dollars to cover incremental costs incurred by contingency operations.<sup>21</sup> Not all of these contingencies involved strictly factional violence, but all were peace operations. These funds were merely to cover the costs of unplanned military deployments during one year. The full emergency aid and recovery costs that will have to be paid by the international community because of factional violence will easily run in the billions of dollars.

Other than the loss of life and economic expenditures, the map of the world may change. Many new, small nation-states may be given international recognition. The control of land containing precious natural resources may shift to previously unrecognized governments. The ownership and control of Weapons

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<sup>21</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, Report On Contingency Operations - Defense Cost and Funding Issues, Report to Congress (Washington: March 1996), 11.

of Mass Destruction (WMD) could spread to groups espousing threatening or unknown agendas. If factional violence continues to proliferate, the challenges to diplomats and statesmen will be immense.

### **THE OPTIONS**

There are two obvious ways to deal with factional violence: negotiation and force. But the issues are too complex to limit the possible alternatives. Each situation is unique and requires independent analysis. In reality, a combination of diplomacy, military intervention and economic assistance are the "Policy Options"<sup>22</sup> that provide the best chance for a solution:

POLICY OPTIONS		
<u>Diplomatic</u>		<u>Military</u>
Recognition		Show of force
Break or lessen diplomatic relations		Preventive deployments
Active mediation		Enforcement of sanctions
Entry into economic or security organizations		Security assistance
Forming cooperative coalitions		Peace operations
		Use of force
	<u>Economic</u>	
	Nation assistance	
	Special trading rights	
	Greater access to markets	
	Foreign aid grants	
	Withdrawal of trading rights or foreign aid	
	Sanctions and embargoes	

This is certainly not an inclusive list of options.

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<sup>22</sup>William T. Johnson, Pandora's Box Reopened: Ethnic Conflict in Europe and Its Implications, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College: December 1994), 29.



Reducing the violence will take creativity and perseverance. Even factions involved in organized crime should be assailed from both economic and military angles. In many cases, however, there may simply be no permanent solution. In Somalia for example, feudal warfare is a way of life. "Guns and aggressiveness, including the willingness to accept casualties, are intrinsic parts of this culture, with women and children considered part of the clan's order of battle."<sup>23</sup>

### ***CHALLENGES FOR THE MILITARY***

The nature and ramifications of factional violence present unique challenges for military leaders. The actual threat could range from conventional military forces to independent criminal acts. The coming threat could be a hybrid of military-militia-guerrilla forces fighting against several similarly configured groups, all competing for control of the same city, region, or country. The environment will be complex, confusing and probably chaotic, as similar, yet separate groups of people pursue their own agendas. Although this will not be a totally unique operating environment for the US military, until recently, real experience was limited to a small segment of America's armed forces.

An increasing number of senior military officers say that changes need to be made in the way America's armed forces

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<sup>23</sup>Kenneth Allard, Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1995), 13.

prepare for future conflicts, but the discussion is really just beginning.<sup>24</sup> Since General Zinni's continuum covers a very broad spectrum--including aspects such as international drug dealing and crime, for which the military's role is still being debated--the focus should be on the ends of the box rather than the middle.

The portion of the continuum where US troops would *most likely* encounter factional violence is on the left side, but Low to Mid Intensity conflicts involving numerous groups cannot be ruled out. It would be a mistake to dismiss the military capabilities of all clans or factions as being undisciplined, low-grade para-military organizations. The factional fighting in the former Yugoslavian Republic proves that some groups can develop a dangerous army rather quickly if former soldiers are among their ranks.

In the event of a conventional conflict--be it low, mid, or even high intensity--few could argue that America's forces are not well prepared. This type of scenario is simply alliance, or coalition warfare (as occurred during Desert Storm for example), without all the forces belonging to a recognized nation.

The issue of factional violence becomes measurably more complex toward the left side of the continuum. This is because

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<sup>24</sup>Air Force Chief of Staff Ronald Fogleman has recently questioned the two MRC concept based on the likelihood of numerous smaller conflicts ongoing simultaneously instead of two major regional conflicts. Marine General John Sheehan (CINC, Atlantic Command), has spoken frequently of the need to transform the services to function effectively in the future.

the fighting often results in a need for humanitarian relief efforts, which often leads to troops conducting Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) missions. In MOOTW, the rules change. The application of the Operational Art<sup>25</sup> is vastly different from combat operations. Virtually all the recognized components<sup>26</sup> must be considered differently and the principles are all together distinct.<sup>27</sup>

As previously mentioned, involvement with factions is most likely to occur during disaster relief, humanitarian, or peace operations. *Peace Operations* (PO's) is a relatively new term under the MOOTW umbrella that encompasses a wide range of activities, including humanitarian assistance.<sup>28</sup> Although the US has been involved in PO's for years--both unilaterally and in conjunction with the UN--clan and factional violence has greatly increased the complexity of such operations. Increasingly, troops are tasked with conducting peace missions in a combat

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<sup>25</sup>Milan Vego, Operational Art, (Naval War College: 1996), NWC 4090.

<sup>26</sup>The components of operational art are: factors, functions, principles, elements, methods of force employment, planning, training and leadership.

<sup>27</sup>Joint Pub 3-07 (Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War), lists the principles of MOOTW as: objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance and legitimacy.

<sup>28</sup>FM 100-23 (Peace Operations), lists activities such as peacemaking, peace building, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement in addition to humanitarian assistance, enforcement of sanctions and others as falling under the category of Peace Operations.

environment. There are a multitude of "Competing Dynamics"<sup>29</sup> which must be considered in PO's involving factions:

COMPETING DYNAMICS	
MISSION DYNAMICS	COALITION TURNOVER
NEIGHBORING FORCES	DISARMAMENT
CIVIC ACTION	NATIONAL GOALS
JOBS	LACK OF JUDICIARY
COMPETING AGENDAS	LOCAL AGREEMENTS
CULTURAL TRIBALISM	ECONOMY OF FORCE
EMERGENCY RELIEF	SECURE ENVIRONMENT
POLITICAL RECONCILIATION	FORCE PROTECTION
WARLORDS/PARAMILITARY	FAILED ECONOMY

These dynamics create significant challenges for conventional military forces. By carefully balancing these issues, commanders can avoid having their troops become just another faction joining in the fighting. In MOOTW, the military become in essence, "State Department Troops."<sup>30</sup> The Army's Special Forces with language and cultural training, combined with unique military skills, are perhaps the best suited military unit to interface with warring factions. However, these units are small, lightly armed, and already over-committed.<sup>31</sup> Military Civil Affairs personnel are also vital to PO missions, but the vast majority of these troops are in the reserves.

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<sup>29</sup>JTFEC's Handbook for Peace Operations, 14 (Figure I-6).

<sup>30</sup>Small Wars Manual, (United States Marine Corps: 1949; reprint ed., 1987), 11.

<sup>31</sup>Glenn W. Goodman, "The Green Berets--Still The Best," Armed Forces Journal International, December 1996, 43-45.  
2,299 deployments in FY 96 alone.

## CONCLUSION

Changes in the world's political landscape with the break-up of the Soviet Union have contributed to a growing unrest among many of the world's population groups. The desire for autonomy, coupled with competition for increasingly scarce resources, has created a situation where violence among cultural, ethnic and religious groups is a common occurrence.

Factional violence is a threat that must be recognized and addressed. The tremendous death and destruction caused by this fighting may force American and world leaders to rethink policies that link intervention to a state of peace. The complexity of the problem demands that statesmen explore every method at their disposal to stop the violence. Diplomatic and military actions should be combined with economic initiatives to address the causes of discord.

Commanders must be capable of employing the operational art against factional threats. The Clausewitzian concepts of fog and friction will be ever-present and compounded by the competing dynamics of peace operations. The organizational structure of America's armed forces may have to be reevaluated if MOOTW missions come to dominate deployments.

Factional violence is a trend that will challenge civilian and military leaders into the next century. What one writer termed the "emerging anarchy"<sup>32</sup> has collectively replaced the former Soviet Union as the greatest threat to world peace.

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<sup>32</sup>Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in Ethnic Conflict and International Security ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 103.

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